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ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT: THE NEW INTRA-ALLIANCE DEBATE

Maurice Eisenstein

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The RAND Corporation, 1700 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90406-2138

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Arms Control And Disarmament: The New-Intra Alliance Debate

Maurice Eisenstein: The RAND Corporation

Before discussing the new Intra-Alliance debate on arms control, I shall first describe the emerging environment and parameters that will influence and define that debate. Moreover, before any meaningful intra-alliance discussion on arms control can proceed, three additional debates must also take place.

One debate will be a continuation of the perennial debate on what the Atlantic Alliance is supposed to be, what its objectives are, and how it will continue to be managed, particularly in light of ongoing changes in Europe and the United States. The NATO alliance has changed and continues to adapt to new realities within Western Europe and America. The change of America's relative economic status in the world, its loss of primacy in many areas of advanced technology, and its growing national debt and trade imbalance generate internal pressures within the United States to reduce military and foreign policy commitments. There is the question, therefore, of what America's future role in NATO ought to be, particularly in light of changes in the Soviet Union on the one hand, and the establishment of the economic community in Western Europe in 1992 on the other. Sentiments continue to be expressed in both the United States and in NATO countries for a reduced or changing U.S. role in (and commitment to) the defense of NATO. In the United States there have been calls for United States troop cuts of from 20,000 now to a 50% reduction by the mid 1990s (President Bush has

since called for a total U.S. troop reduction in Europe of 30,000.) The trend of greater involvement of alliance countries in decisions to deploy nuclear weapons and in arms control negotiations already suggests a changing U.S. role from one of political dominance to one of partnership.

A second debate must establish the criteria by which to evaluate and judge which are the authentic and durable changes in Soviet political and military policies. Which of Gorbachev's unilateral reductions in forces and political changes, domestically and internationally, are legitimate and which are meant simply to appeal to the world desire for peace and are more for propaganda purposes. That there have been significant political and economic changes in the Soviet Union is clear, but whether Gorbachev will survive or whether these political changes will continue to be reflected in Soviet foreign policy is uncertain. What do the Soviets mean when they claim to follow a defense oriented strategy of military sufficiency? Will Soviet foreign policy rely less on military strength? What is certain is that a widely varying interpretation within the alliance as to Gorbachev's motivations and the direction he will be taking Russia, domestically and in international affairs, can be a cause of stress and alliance discord inhibiting the establishment of a consensus on NATO policies. Equally important is reaching a consensus on what changes in Eastern Europe are real and are likely to continue, and how alliance policies could stimulate further changes. The underlying question then for the arms control debate is how much has the military threat to NATO diminished, for how long, and what could be the long term political and military consequences of pursuing specific arms control policies?

The third debate must be on what alliance strategy should be to meet the continuing security needs of NATO; what policies of cooperation and competition with the USSR should be pursued and what forces would be required to achieve that strategy. The realistic selection of a strategy and policy must be sensitive to the political environment throughout NATO, the availability of resources, and the realistic possibilities for negotiating constraints or reductions of NATO and Warsaw Pact conventional and nuclear weaponry. Assuming that NATO's flexible response strategy will continue to rely on both conventional and nuclear forces it will be important to understand how these forces interrelate with changing Soviet forces, and how quantitative and qualitative changes in each weapons category can affect the other; that is, how changes in NATO's nuclear force structure affect its conventional force structure, and visa versa. In sum, the alliance has to decide how it will defend itself in the future, in light of the perceived changing threat to its security, the changing political environment, constrained resources, and emerging technologies. If through negotiations conventional arms parity between the NATO and Pact countries can be reached, what happens to the U.S. policy of extended deterrence? Does NATO seek pure strategies of deterrence, deterring future conventional attacks with conventional forces and deterring nuclear attack with nuclear forces? In other words, does parity in conventional forces mean the end to the doctrine of flexible response through possible first nuclear use and controlled escalation? And if so, what configuration of NATO nuclear forces would be required? Even if a flexible nuclear response doctrine is maintained how shall it be

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configured? Is it possible to substitute sea-based nuclear forces for ground-based nuclear forces? Clearly it is important to resolve these issues, but these too can be the bases for generating alliance tensions.

I do not mean to imply that these debates must precede or be completed before an arms control debate begins. Indeed, these debates should overlap and influence one another. What is important to emphasize is that arms control should support the security interests of NATO and not be taken out of the NATO security context. Arms control taken out of context of the military requirements for NATO can be risky. Some have argued that the INF treaty, possibly, and the Reykjavik summit, certainly, are examples of such risks where enthusiasm for reaching arms accords may have or could have harmed NATO security interests.

The military rationale for strategic arms control in the United States has been to protect its nuclear deterrent forces by stemming the inexorable growth in size and capability of Soviet strategic forces, particularly in light of the United States inability to improve the survivability of its land-based missile forces. It appears that the Soviets are now or will soon be ready to call a halt, unilaterally, if necessary, to the expansion of their strategic nuclear missile forces, thus reducing the military incentive for the United States to pursue strategic arms control negotiations. The United States can, with unilateral changes such as deploying mobile ICBMs, achieve its objective of a survivable nuclear land-based deterrent. This is not to suggest that the United States opposes a realignment of strategic forces that would reduce the first strike potential of the Soviets. Thus, one

aspect of the U.S. military incentive for pursuing strategic arms control measures may be measurably reduced with the introduction of changing Soviet policies.

As perceived by NATO, the threat posed by the Soviets may diminish as a result of the Soviets' unilateral reductions in conventional arms and their preoccupation with internal problems, thereby lessening NATO's incentive for conventional arms control. Again, this is not to suggest that after such unilateral Soviet reductions that parity of conventional forces between East and West will prevail, but it could even reduce further NATO perceptions of Soviet intentions or incentives to attack.

The political environment in the United States toward arms control, it appears, has changed little in the past few years. The intensity of the anti-nuclear movement has declined, but the pressure for arms cuts stemming from government budget deficits is increasing. Concern for the INF treaty upsetting NATO deterrence doctrine of flexible response has caused some in the Congress, normally sympathetic to arms control, to call for a slow down or reexamination, of strategic arms negotiations until a conventional arms balance in central Europe can be reached. This call has also been echoed by more conservative members of Congress as well. Moreover, in the recent U.S. presidential elections, while not denying the need for arms control, a president who stood for continuing a relatively strong national defense policy was elected. The lessening of East-West tensions, the signing of the INF treaty eliminating a whole class of nuclear weapons, and allowing intrusive on-site inspection may have satisfied, at least temporarily, the national thirst for arms control agreements in the United States. It is interesting to note that

while some have called for the administration to get on with arms control negotiations with the Soviets, that chorus of voices, until now, has been relatively small. The strategic arms talks, which were well along when recessed last year, are not like to begin until July of this year and substantive negotiations not until the following round in October. Political pressures for strategic arms control continue in the United States, but may have abated at least temporarily. Mr. Gorbachev and his peace offensive do not apparently appeal to the American public as much as does to Western Europeans.

The political climate in NATO also appears ambivalent in that arms control is high on the political agenda of most NATO governments, but also high on the agenda is the desire among NATO publics to maintain defenses. Low threat perceptions stemming from Gorbachev's peace offensive, tight budgets, reduced manpower availability all add to the press for reduced military spending, but the support for existing levels of NATO conventional defenses, at least for now, appears to remain high.

The Soviet preoccupation with rebuilding its inefficient and crumbling economy should give them a strong incentive to pull back on military spending and to pursue further unilateral cuts in expensive military forces. Moreover, the possibility exists that with "glasnost" the Soviets will find it exceedingly difficult to gain domestic support to pursue an aggressive foreign policy threatening to western interests. Indeed, whether there is a crackdown or not on glasnost, it would appear very unlikely that the Soviets, unless provoked, will become aggressive outside their borders for at least the next decade.

A retrenchment of forces by the Soviets and their focus on domestic problems, however, does not necessarily spell total relief for the west or for the free world. In the Nixon era, as reaction to the Vietnam war rose, a policy of arming regional allies and surrogates was fostered to replace a reduced U.S. security presence. It would appear that the Soviets may have something like that in mind as they sell or lease quantities of weapons, offensive in nature, to their regional clients (i.e. Syria, Libya, and India), or perhaps, strategy has little to do with these moves, but rather that arms exports earn the Soviets hard currency. Either way, Soviet arms transfer policies can potentially add to regional tensions and threaten western interests.

Added to the Soviet interest in reducing military costs is their abiding interest in slowing the growth of western military technology that strains their resources and threatens their military super power status. Smart battlefield weapons, stealth bombers, cruise missiles, SDI, ASAT, and a new generation of nuclear weapons are just some of the advanced technologies and weapons that the Soviets must stay abreast of if the East-West military competition continues unabated. Thus, as in the past, the Soviets seek relief from the technological prowess of the West through arms control. Without this technology competition with the West i.e. a vigorous SDI R&D effort and the potential for some deployment, the Soviets may not find negotiating asymmetric strategic force reductions favoring the U.S. very interesting.

For the Soviets, the political, economical, and military need for a respite from the arms race (and thus the need for arms control), may be stronger than ever. For the United States and NATO those needs exist

but they are more political needs and less military or economic needs, assuming the Soviets do unilaterally reduce their conventional forces. It would appear for the first time in more than a decade that the Soviets come to the negotiating table with a greater urgency for concluding arms control agreements than does the West. In the past, limiting U.S. technological advancement and maintaining numerical superiority may have been the *raison d'être* for Soviet negotiations. Now the Soviets may believe they will need arms control to keep from falling behind the West militarily on all accounts. A halt to the qualitative arms race will be essential for the Soviets if they wish to bolster their economy, and are to have a prayer of competing militarily with the West in the future.

What this adds up to is a requirement for the alliance to establish its arms control agenda based on a reasonable assessment of current conditions in the USSR and the Eastern bloc, and a coherent political and military strategy for its defense. Thus, an early set of issues already up for debate is whether a conventional arms control negotiated treaty that approaches parity (below current NATO levels) should precede any new arms treaty reducing U.S. nuclear forces, and whether a treaty on reducing or eliminating chemical weapons should parallel or also follow a conventional arms treaty? While political changes are clearly underway within the Soviet Union, including changes to their foreign policies and reductions to their conventional forces, there is yet little to demonstrate a clear reduction is underway in Soviet military capability. Until Soviet actions to reduce their forces are underway and understood in terms of how that will effect Soviet military

capabilities, the West's pursuit of arms control agreements should be a cautious one. Moreover, in addition to judging arms control measures in traditional terms (war avoidance, stability, and reducing the consequences of war), we should also judge the desirability of arms control measures in terms of their "irreversibility". That is, having drawn down or eliminated some category of weapons--even if the Soviets have drawn down to a much greater extent than has NATO--will NATO be able to reverse track and restore comparable forces as rapidly, or nearly as rapidly, as the Soviet Union if the Soviets were to decide to reverse their position and redeploy? Could NATO respond to a new nuclear build up with one of it's own, or to a Soviet conventional force build up with one of it's own? Would there be political or technical inhibitions to such build-up in the future? Would the inhibitions be less or greater if there were no U.S. participation in NATO? As important is the assessment of whether the Soviets will be able in a few years to reverse track to effect a weapons build-up. Here again, it is important to evaluate among other factors the durability of glasnost and the opportunity of the Soviet people to influence Soviet behavior.

The imbalance of conventional forces in favor of the Pact alliance has the major, if not primary, basis for justifying a U.S. nuclear presence in NATO with a nuclear deterrence doctrine. The U.S. appears to be moving toward stressing the conventional and chemical arms negotiations before going too much further in nuclear arms talks. Nuclear arms once reduced in numbers or taken out of Europe are not likely to return. Political constraints and technical reasons will make their return difficult if not impossible. It is important to understand

what future role nuclear weapons will play in the defense of NATO, particularly if substantial reductions in conventional forces come about, and where NATO and Pact forces approach parity.

While wishing to stress conventional arms reduction talks, the strategic talks can be readily resumed. There are important aspects of a START agreement that the U.S. and USSR have not worked out yet such as limitations on sea-launch cruise missiles. The outcome of the conventional talks and any future theater nuclear arms talks could affect the importance of having nuclear-armed, sea-launched cruise missiles for the defense of NATO, particularly if nuclear theater forces are further reduced or a triple-zero-option is adopted. The Soviets have in the START negotiations sought variously to ban or to impose severe constraints on the numbers of SLCM each side should be allowed.

Progress may also be made in the U.S.-Soviet bilateral space/defense talks. SDI research has not progressed to a point where it can be viewed as achieving President Reagan's objective of an "Astrodome" missile defense. It has progressed to a point where it may make sense for these negotiations to focus on allowing space-based sensors that measure ballistic missile attacks and that can differentiate between a disarming first strike and a much smaller unauthorized one. This adds stability to U.S.-Soviet nuclear relations. Moreover, it would be appropriate to discuss the deployment of a defense against an inadvertent launch of a ballistic missile; enough defense to thwart an inadvertent launch, not enough to affect either side's ability to effectively retaliate.

Recognizing that there is great political concern in NATO that SNF negotiations could inexorably lead to a triple-zero-option, any substantive discussions with the Soviets now to reduce SNF in Europe would be antithetical to NATO interests. I assume that actions taken by the Federal Republic of Germany to stimulate and argue for such negotiations are based on domestic political consideration and will be resolved in the next months. NATO should make clear that negotiations for further reductions in NATO theater nuclear forces, if they should come at all, will be subsequent to or contingent upon negotiations reducing conventional forces to parity at some appropriate level.

A chemical weapons treaty has been in the process of negotiation in the United Nations Committee on Disarmament for almost a decade. There are many problems in concluding an effective chemical weapons treaty, but to help stem the global spread of chemical weapons, and for self interest, the U.S. and the USSR, NATO and the Pact nations could conclude a chemical weapons treaty that requires each nation to reduce its chemical weapons stocks to a few thousand tons over a period of 5 to 10 years. While not a total ban, given the difficulties in monitoring treaty compliance (i.e., verifying the quantities of chemical weapons the Soviets may have), negotiating a total chemical weapons ban can await the successful development of improved monitoring capabilities and a global treaty banning all chemical weapons stocks.

In the current conventional force negotiations in Vienna, NATO proposals are geared toward reductions in tank, APCs, artillery, bridging equipment, and other military equipment that enhance a conventional offensive strike. In principle, reductions will be sought

to below current NATO force levels. While the Soviet request to negotiate naval forces in the Conventional Forces in Europe talks can be dismissed as a tactical move, it is less likely that they will give in on not including tactical air. The obvious Soviet objective is to reduce if not rid the continent of U.S. nuclear forces. Their thrust for a triple-zero-option and reduced NATO tactical air forces, including U.S. air forces, would satisfy those objectives. This again raises the need to understand where these different talks are likely to go and to decide now what long range military strategy NATO wishes to pursue. But since it is unclear how far the Soviets will change militarily, the West should move cautiously. It also makes sense to focus on confidence-building measures between NATO and the Bloc countries in the Confidence and Security Building Measures talks to reduce tension and instabilities. This can be accomplished by measures that improve the transparency of each side's military by each side continuing to observe the other's military exercises, by introducing crisis avoidance activities in which both sides participate in.

Since monitoring a conventional force reductions treaty will be very difficult and likely give rise to large uncertainties and possible misunderstandings, it would be useful and instructive to consider, separately and possibly less formally, new joint efforts by NATO and the Pact countries to develop a monitoring regime for a conventional arms treaty. That is to select specific measures and jointly work out in the field how those measures might be monitored. The results of this effort need not be binding to either side, but should be the equivalent of a laboratory for cooperatively developing monitoring techniques.

For all these negotiations, verifying treaty compliance will be difficult. Indeed, in all instances treaty monitoring regimes must be sought that balance the benefit of detecting or deterring violations, and the risk of loss to Pact inspection teams of sensitive data and information compromising NATO security. Devising adequate and acceptable treaty monitoring for verification will be difficult and time consuming. NATO governments need to better explain the need for verifiable treaties and to moderate public expectations for quick arms control agreements.

The opportunity for pursuing arms control to maintain NATO security appears promising, but caution is still appropriate. With the barrage of Soviet proposals for arms limitations, the alliance debate on how to proceed will be noisy and contentious, but such debates are always noisy in and among democracies. The success of these arms control negotiations to reduce arms, enhance stability, and reduce tensions will ultimately depend on alliance cooperation and that cooperation should be forthcoming on the basis of mutual interests among alliance members.

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